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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Hamas Elections Aftermath
President Bush - State of the Union
PARIS - Monday, January 30, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Hamas Elections Aftermath
President Bush - State of the Union

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Domestic stories dominate, with the hostile take over attempt of France's Arcelor by India's Mittal Steel in the lead this weekend and in today's economic press. In international news, Israel's stance towards Hamas, Europe and the U.S.'s questions about what attitude to adopt are today's top stories. (See Part C) Le Figaro leads with "Should Financial Aid to the Palestinians Be Cut Off?" Alexandrine Bouilhet comments: "Europe may be tempted to align with America's intransigence. The EU remains firm about the principles, and like the U.S., is hesitating about using financial sanctions that may penalize the people." Le Monde interviews Europe's FM Javier Solana: "A terrorist group does not gain legitimacy because it has won an election."

Le Journal du Dimanche interviews David Frum, former Bush advisor and the man who coined the phrase "axis of evil," on the Hamas victory: "Little is said about President Bush's plan to spread democracy, and that is that democracy forces leaders, but also the people, to be accountable. The Palestinians have chosen people who promised integrity but will deliver violence and instability. This says a lot about Palestinian society."

Liberation reports on the disappointment felt by Iraqis because the Saddam trial has been disrupted by resignations and interruptions, while Le Journal du Dimanche carries a full page report on "The Hidden Wounds of Iraq's Veterans" by Karen Lajon who interviews wounded soldiers at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. "The obsession with zero casualty has brought on a new reality: nine wounded for one casualty, and one amputee out of three." A marine is interviewed to conclude the article: "Yeah, I guess it is a positive mission. We brought freedom and democracy to the Iraqis. I do not regret having served in the Marines. But I have contradictory feelings. What happened had to happen. But we must draw the lesson."

Regional L'Alsace in its editorial wonders "why President Bush chose to comment on Abu Gharaib at this time." And goes on to list all the negative issues which the President will have to deal with in his State of the Union message. (See Part C)

Liberation devotes a three-page report to "New Orleans, The Ghost Town" as announced on their cover. Inside, editorialist Gerard Dupuy says Katrina "showed the world the dark face of Louisiana." Dupuy who titles his column "Abandonment" criticizes the lack of federal reconstruction efforts, noting that private initiative is favored. One story reports that "Louisiana is stagnating in the ruins," while another notes that "aid is slow in coming."

In another U.S. related story, Alan Greenspan's departure on Wednesday is front-paged in La Tribune: "The U.S. Turns the Greenspan Page." La Tribune comments: "Greenspan contributed to major growth, but he leaves behind abysmal deficits and a worrisome real estate bubble. Bernanke is taking over just when the U.S. economy is slowing down."

But what holds the attention of the economic papers is the "hostile" attempted takeover of Arcelor by the Indian company Mittal. Arcelor rejected Mittal's offer. La Croix's editorial believes the hostile takeover will serve as a "test for Europe. All must be done to find an alternative solution to Mittal's takeover of Arcelor." France Soir's headline: "Hold-up on Steel" and editorial put forward that "it is a happy coincidence that this takeover is happening at the same time as the close of the two opposing summits in Davos and in Caracas because this serves to remind governments of the insubstantiality of borders with regard to markets." In La Tribune, editorialist Francois-Xavier Pietri comments: "Beyond

Arcelor and its fate, what is at stake is the future of Europe's major industries, caught as they are between the proverbial North American rock and the Asian hard place." Coincidentally, Le Journal du Dimanche carries an opinion column asking "In 2010, India or China?" while Le Monde carries an analysis entitled: "China and India Supplant Europe."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Hamas Elections Aftermath

"A Narrow Path in Face of Hamas"
Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (01/30): "The West has a narrow path in which to maneuver in face of Hamas, forcing it to re-assess its peace process. On the one hand, one cannot punish the Palestinian people for having taken part in a political process, which no one is contesting. To do this would mean opening a door to more radicalization. On the other hand we cannot help finance a radical movement which today questions the legitimacy of Israel and can tomorrow call for its destruction. If we adopted this line of conduct, it would mean that the peace process has created a monster. The stakes go well beyond the Palestinian situation. Western democracies need to define the rules that must be applied to radicalism. because electoral legitimacy is not enough. As the EU FM Solana said, an electoral victory does not give legitimacy to a terrorist organization. Hamas must comply with four conditions if it wants to be a political partner in the peace process: it must disarm, renounce violence, recognize Israel and adopt the commitments made by the Palestinian Authority to date. But Hamas will not easily accept these conditions. and may turn out to be a harsher negotiator than the PLO. The international community can play a major role, as long as it is aware that the slightest sign of internal disagreement will be exploited by Hamas. The next few weeks will be grueling."

President Bush - State of the Union

"A Campaigning President Bush"
Francois Becet in regional l'Alsace (01/30): "All of a sudden today President Bush is 'regretting' the Abu Gharaib episode and the photographs which he says 'cover us with shame.' Has it taken him all this time to realize this? And why is he returning to this episode now? While it is true that Bush's America continues to seek love and wants to sincerely, albeit clumsily, spread democracy, there must be other reasons explaining why President Bush is apologizing. His Sunday message has probably something to do with the new terrorist threats, which the Bush administration is taking very seriously. President Bush may be trying to soften the resentment felt in the Arab Muslim world. But President Bush is also campaigning. He will need to explain much and be very convincing. Acknowledging the Abu Gharaib mistake could be the first step of a new Presidential offensive. We will know more tomorrow, after his state of the union message. He will reiterate his 'optimism' and his determination to 'defend the cause of freedom in the world.' But we are also waiting for concrete acts, especially in the Middle East." STAPLETON